

CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM AND WATER RESOURCES UPDATES

January 2024

Chesapeake Bay Program

[The winners and losers of a changing Potomac River](#)

Bay Journal

If we want to understand how a changing climate is impacting the Potomac River, researchers think we should look to the people, the drinking water supply — and the fish. Dozens of experts gathered at the Griffith Water Treatment Plant in Fairfax, VA, recently to compare notes on the health of a river that's a major tributary to the Chesapeake Bay and supplies drinking water to nearly 6 million people.

[After 40 years, Chesapeake Bay Program yields mixed results](#)

Bay Journal

On a chilly, overcast day in December 1983, more than 700 people who were worried about the declining health of the Chesapeake Bay packed a large hall at George Mason University in Northern Virginia to press for action to save it.

[Anglers, environmentalists push for partial moratorium on Chesapeake menhaden catch](#)

Bay Journal

Sportfishing groups and environmentalists are calling for a partial moratorium on Virginia's menhaden reduction fishery, citing troubling declines of certain bird and fish species that feed on them.

[Maryland Oyster Survey Reveals Remarkable 2023 for Oyster Reproduction](#)

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

The Maryland Department of Natural Resources announced the results of its fall oyster survey, recording another strong year for juvenile oysters in Maryland. The survey measures the population status of oysters in the Chesapeake Bay, specifically spatfall intensity and reproductive success. This marks the fourth consecutive year of above-average results for oysters in Maryland.

[CBF Statement on 2023 Chesapeake Bay Dead Zone](#)

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

The dead zone in the Chesapeake Bay this year is the smallest since monitoring began in 1985, according to data released today by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Old Dominion University, and Virginia Institute of Marine Science.

[Maryland to curb striped bass fishing in spring spawning season](#)

Bay Journal

Spurred by slumping striped bass reproduction in Maryland waters, the state Department of Natural Resources is moving to curtail fishing for the popular migratory species during its spawning run next spring.

Water Quality, Wastewater and Stormwater

[Virginia water board approves new sediment limits in five counties over aquatic life impacts](#)

Virginia Mercury

The State Water Control Board last week approved new limits on how much sediment, or loose dirt,

can enter into waterways in the counties of Rockbridge, Augusta, Bedford, Franklin and Pittsylvania because of the impact such pollution has on aquatic life.

[Baltimore harbor advocates say it's \(finally\) clean enough for swimming](#)

Bay Journal

For the last few years, leaders of Baltimore's Healthy Harbor campaign have been saying the once trash-strewn and sewage-tainted water is clean enough for swimming, at least on most days. So, on a warm sunny day in early September, without any fanfare, a dozen of them donned life vests and jumped into the Inner Harbor. The horde of sea nettles in the water gave them pause, but the area where they planned to jump in got swept with a net to thin out the stinging marine life.

[Volunteers aim to restore stream with artificial beaver dams](#)

Bay Journal

50 volunteers helped build six simple artificial structures in the streambed — designed to mimic the engineering marvels of beavers. The goal of these “beaver dam analogs” is not so much to attract real beavers, though that is hoped for and may well happen in time. Rather, the immediate aim was to build something that does what actual beaver dams do: filter sediment out of rushing water, often aggravated by a lack of effective stormwater management upstream.

[Virginia Gov. Youngkin Proposes New Funding for Water Quality and Flood Preparedness Programs](#)

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Today Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin announced that his proposed budget will include \$500 million for conservation projects, including support for water quality and flood preparedness. The Governor's full budget proposal will be released on Wednesday, Dec. 20. Virginia's two-year budget will be considered by legislators during Virginia's legislative session, which begins Jan. 10.

Drinking Water, Water Supply and Drought

[COG's Water Supply and Drought Report for November](#)

As part of the Metropolitan Washington Water Supply and Drought Awareness Response Plan, COG issues monthly drought reports from May- October. Potomac streamflow and groundwater levels continue to decline due to the lack of precipitation in our region. The most recent U.S. Drought monitor released on October 31 indicates that a range of abnormal, moderate, and severe drought exists in the Potomac Watershed.

[ICPRB's Water Supply Outlook for December](#)

Due to the persistence of below-average precipitation, the publication period for the Water Supply Outlook has been extended into December, a month not covered by the ICPRB's Low-Flow Outlook model. Currently, the basin is grappling with a range of dry conditions, with 33.29% classified as abnormally dry (D0), 28.40% as moderate drought (D1), and 30.12% as severe drought (D2), as indicated by the U.S. Drought Monitor report released on November 30.

[Here's what you're really swallowing when you drink bottled water](#)

Washington Post

People are swallowing hundreds of thousands of microscopic pieces of plastic each time they drink a liter of bottled water, scientists have shown — a revelation that could have profound implications for human health.

[Bottled water industry pushes back on new study warning of nanoplastics](#)

The Hill

The bottled water industry has pushed back against recent findings from Columbia University that its product contains hundreds of thousands of potentially dangerous “nanoplastics” – plastic particles small enough to get into human cells. In a statement to The Hill, an industry trade association urged people to keep calm (and keep drinking bottled water) while scientists develop a more thorough understanding of these plastics and their impact on the human body.

PFAS

[PFAS clean up could cost Virginia public water systems millions for years to come](#)

Virginia Mercury

Virginia’s public water systems could need to spend \$390,000 to \$2.4 million a year for the next 35 years to clean up a group of chemicals known as PFAS or “forever chemicals,” according to estimates from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Private systems that rely on wells could also face costs of between \$14,000 and \$17,000 annually for the next 35 years.

[Tampa is bringing a new water filtration system to the U.S. that will help remove forever chemicals](#)

WUSF NPR

Tampa officials are bringing a new technology to the U.S. that removes organic matter from drinking water, and it’s supposed to make it easier to filter out forever chemicals, known as PFAS. Once completed, the Suspended Ion Exchange plant in Tampa is expected to be the first in the U.S. and largest in the world.

[EPA says final PFAS drinking water regulation and hazardous designations on the horizon](#)

WasteDive

The U.S. EPA could finalize national drinking water standards for certain PFAS in January and finalize its designation of two types of PFAS as hazardous substances by March, according to a timetable published last week. Separately, the agency also expects to update its guidance on how to dispose of or destroy PFAS-containing material sometime “this winter,” according to an EPA spokesperson.

Climate and Energy

[U.S. cut climate pollution in 2023, but not fast enough to limit global warming](#)

WAMU

The United States reduced emissions of climate-warming greenhouse gasses last year, after two years in which emissions rose. But the decline wasn’t enough to meet climate targets set by the Biden administration. That would require much steeper cuts, most likely by significantly reducing the use of fossil fuels.

[Large Pennsylvania solar project gets second blow from court](#)

Bay Journal

A solar developer’s plans to build Pennsylvania’s largest solar field near Gettysburg has received a second court ruling that upholds a municipality’s rejection of the project. In an opinion filed on Nov. 30, a panel of three judges in the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court refused to overturn a lower court ruling that had upheld a 2021 decision by Mount Joy Township to turn down a crucial permit sought by NextEra Energy.

[Major Flooding Across Chesapeake Bay Watershed Highlights Need for Lasting Solutions From MD and VA Legislators](#)

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Today, communities across the Chesapeake Bay watershed are experiencing severe coastal flooding. Strong onshore flow, mixed with heavy rainfall and high winds, is resulting in significant flooding and erosion along the coast, streams, and creeks in Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, D.C. School delays and road closures have followed.

Food, Forestry and Agriculture

Maryland plants nearly half a million trees so far through DNR initiative

Baltimore Fishbowl

Maryland is closing in on a major milestone towards its 10-year goal of planting 5 million native trees by the year 2031. The 5 Million Trees Initiative has planted nearly half a million trees (497,890 total) since the effort launched in July 2021, with more than 180,000 planted in 2023.

Agroforestry Project Aims for Climate Solutions on Ag Lands

The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and multiple partners are launching a 5-year project to catalyze significant private investments into the agroforestry industry while increasing farmers' incomes and delivering environmental benefits such as enhanced carbon sequestration, soil health, biodiversity and water quality.

Let's pay farmers for outcomes that restore Va. rivers, streams and the Chesapeake Bay

Virginia Mercury

What small step should Virginia take now to create healthier rivers and streams for future generations? Legislators could launch a new pilot program that pays farmers based on how much cleaner they leave nearby waterways. Such a pay-for-outcomes program would foster a new way of thinking that drives progress in farm conservation at a time when it's needed most.

More Funding for Farm Practices and Livestock Exclusion Are Among CBF's Legislative Priorities for Pennsylvania in 2024

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Increased and sustained funding for farm practices and more streambank fencing are among what the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) sees as legislative priorities for Pennsylvania in 2024.

Upcoming Meetings and Events

WRTC: January 12

CBPC: January 19

FARM: February 9

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